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ABSTRACT

Developed by member institutions of the Association for Community Based Education, this booklet identifies the performance standards and indicators of quality that apply specifically to community based, postsecondary institutions. The standards are grouped in four major sections, and each is followed by a brief rationale. Part I, covering mission and goals, presents standards related to mission statements; awareness and use of these statements; the development and review process; the linkage of individual and community development; and key issues such as economic development, constituency, and cooperative relationships. Part II focuses on organizational factors, including governance, administration, fiscal and personnel management, planning, community relations, and communications. Part III deals with programs and outcomes, addressing program design, the learning process, learning content, program support, and evaluation. Finally, part IV details standards related to information management, considering management information systems and categories of information such as learner characteristics, staff, governing boards, program characteristics, financial resources, fundraising, the community, and interorganizational arrangements. (LAL)

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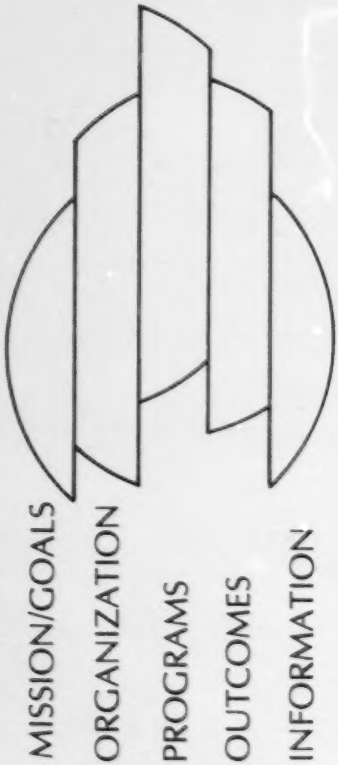
STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE FOR COMMUNITY BASED EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS



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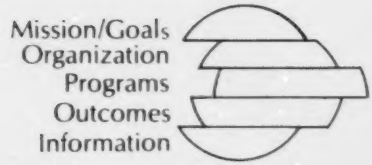
STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE FOR COMMUNITY BASED EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS



A Publication of the Association for Community Based Education

The Association for Community Based Education is a national membership organization serving independent, community based educational institutions which are locally controlled and offer programs aimed at individual growth and community-wide development. The Association acts as a clearinghouse of information about community based education, sponsors meetings and conferences, produces a variety of publications, and provides technical assistance and targeted grants to member institutions.

For further information about the Association or its activities, contact:

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PREFACE

The ***Standards of Performance for Community Based Educational Institutions*** and accompanying ***Self Assessment Workbook*** are the culmination of a three-year intensive effort and eight years of planning. The suggestion to develop standards and self-assessment guidelines that would be appropriate for community based educational institutions was first discussed in 1975 by representatives of the 22 institutions that came together to plan the establishment of the Association.

We were well aware then of the ironies present in the condition of our institutions. On the one hand, these groups were clearly successful not only in providing meaningful education, but also in dealing effectively with problems that had plagued post-secondary education for decades. They were providing access to adults that more established institutions of higher education were unable to reach; they were demonstrating high retention and completion rates; they were developing programs linking academic learning to life and work experience; they were addressing their communities' needs for development in parallel with individual aspirations for learning; and they were maintaining organizational structures which were accountable and relevant to the community. On the other hand, they were operating on the fringe of accepted educational practice, denied both recognition and support. Even those with degree-granting authority which were admitted to candidacy status by regional accrediting associations found progress toward that type of legitimacy extremely difficult.

The concern for relevant guidelines for self-assessment, first voiced by representatives from institutions concerned with accreditation, was echoed by those from other institutions as well. All wanted to assess and improve the quality of their institutions, but in a manner true to their nature, context and practice. And there was little or nothing available to guide them.

During 1977-1978 a task force of representatives from member institutions again reviewed the need for quality standards for community based education, and recommended action by the Association. These recommendations were incorporated into a five-year plan approved by our membership in 1979. The following year, with support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, a project was launched to develop, field-test and implement quality standards and evaluative criteria for community based educational institutions. This book and the ***Self Assessment Workbook*** are a major outcome of that project.

Since 1980 the Association has developed, tested and revised three drafts of the standards. Our members have been very helpful in guiding our work and in providing specific suggestions for refining each draft. Names of a particularly active group of individuals who attended review meetings and in some cases field-tested sections of the documents are listed following this preface.

Members of the Project Advisory Committee also contributed significantly to the project. These experts in quality assurance and evaluation met twice as a group to give direction to the project. Individual members reviewed and commented on each draft of the documents. Their names are also listed. Additional valuable suggestions were offered by Joan Givens, *Education Program Specialist, U.S. Department of Education;* Gilbert Johnson, *Program Associate, Kettering Foundation;* Kathryn Moore, *Associate Professor, Penn State University;* Rodney Riffel, *Research Associate, National Institute of Education;* and Steward Rosenfeld, *Senior Associate, National Institute of Education.*

During the last two years Jacques Nacson coordinated the project and carried out the bulk of the research and writing related to it. Dr. Nacson was provided on-going consultation by Kathryn Villa, who also developed the first draft of the manual. Kamer Davis edited the standards for publication and developed the final format of the workbook.

This project would not have been possible without the generous and consistent support of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, particularly Alden Dunham and Karin Egan, who provided encouragement, valuable suggestions, and unwavering confidence in our work.

These documents represent an important milestone for institutions practicing community based education. In coming years, as they are used by a greater number of community based educational institutions, they are likely to be revised and refined. In the meantime, we hope that they will prove to be a useful tool for a diversity of educational institutions.

Christofer P. Zachariadis
Executive Director
March, 1983.

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INTRODUCTION

DETERMINING INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY

What constitutes a quality educational institution? Conventional wisdom and the practice of accreditation have highlighted a number of contributing factors; for example, a clearly defined mission, meaningful goals, relevant and effective programs, competent faculty, adequate resources, appropriate facilities, able leadership, an emphasis on institutional improvement and a supportive administrative structure. Taken together, factors such as these define essential elements of good practice, but they do not in themselves assure quality.

To find the key determinants of quality it is necessary to look behind the elements of practice to the decisions which shape them and the relations which link them. The nature of the mission and the manner in which it is determined, the degree to which goals and programs derive from that mission, the measures chosen to determine program effectiveness and faculty competence, the ways in which available resources are allocated to meet the institution's purposes, and the congruence between operating principles and actual practice are generally recognized as significant indicators of quality.

Such indicators are central to the assessment of all educational institutions, community based educational institutions among them. But because they are general indicators, applicable to any institution, they do not really get at the essence of what it means to be a particular kind of institution. To look at community based educational institutions without considering their close links to their communities, their commitment to serving people with special needs, their emphasis on linked individual growth and community-wide development, or their use of field-based learning would be to ignore some of the most essential elements of their practice. Additional indicators are thus needed to address those elements that make community based educational institutions unique.

A concern with identifying the performance standards and indicators of quality that apply not simply to the practice of education, but to the practice of community based education in particular, has led to the development of this book. Its primary intended audience is community based educators wishing to assess and improve the quality of their institutions. This is not to say, however, that other types of educational institutions or community based organizations will not find the standards useful. Practices pioneered by community based educational institutions can certainly be adapted by other institutions, and many of the measures of quality performance collected here can be usefully applied within other institutional settings.

HOW THIS BOOK IS ORGANIZED

This book is essentially a collection of statements—*standards*—each of which defines an element of successful performance for a community based educational institution. Following each standard is a brief rationale for its inclusion. The standards are grouped into four major sections:

Part I, Mission and Goals, defines essential components of statements of mission and goals, and examines the process through which such statements are developed and reviewed.

Part II, Organization, examines the structure, planning processes, policies and procedures through which the institution's operations are managed.

Part III, Programs and Outcomes, examines the design of programs, the content they include, the support they require, the outcomes they strive for, the processes through which learning takes place, and the ways processes and outcomes can be evaluated.

Part IV, Information Management, examines the management of data and information as an institutional resource.

Within each section the standards are grouped under major headings. A brief overview precedes each section.

USING THIS BOOK AND THE SELF ASSESSMENT WORKBOOK

While by no means all-inclusive, this listing of standards is indeed comprehensive. Not all standards will be appropriate to all institutions. Nonetheless, read as a whole they provide a vision of what community based education *can* be that should be helpful, whether or not a particular standard applies in a given situation.

Another way to use the book is as an assessment tool. Within an institution not all appropriate standards will have been achieved to the same degree. In reviewing the standards readers can pinpoint areas that need strengthening. The assessment checklist included with the book can be used to quickly check off how much further attention each standard requires. Readers may wish to make extra copies of the checklist and collect additional opinions as well.

The checklist includes a reference to a related section in the ***Self Assessment Workbook,*** a companion document. The workbook guides the reader through a more detailed assessment of each element of practice by asking a series of descriptive and evaluative questions. The workbook also suggests where readers can find the information they need to complete the self-assessment.

The book and workbook can also be used as aids for problem-solving. If an institution is having problems in a given area of practice, a review of the related standards will provide insight as to the way things should be, and

the corresponding workbook questions will help in discovering what has gone wrong and identifying the steps that must be taken to improve conditions.

Finally, it is hoped that these books will be used by community based institutions and others as a challenge for seeking additional avenues of institutional improvement and discovering new and meaningful ways to promote learning.

PART I
Mission and Goals

A crucial determinant of quality for a community based educational institution is the extent to which it has defined its purpose, role and task in education and community development—its mission and *its related institutional and programmatic* goals.

Both the process and the product of mission and goal development are important. A cooperative development and review process generates valuable ideas, allows incorporation of a variety of points of view, and clarifies the institution's aims. The resulting product is an invaluable resource for anyone interested in understanding the values which shape the institution and the outcomes it is striving for.

A carefully developed statement of mission and goals serves as a touchstone and guide. It tells program designers the aims their learning activities should accomplish. It tells administrators the basic strategy and approach they should take in seeking to meet objectives. It tells learners what the institution proposes to do, and to do for them. And it provides the ultimate reference point for assessing the usefulness and appropriateness of programs and activities over time.

A. EXISTENCE OF STATEMENTS OF MISSION AND GOALS

MISSION STATEMENT

A.1 *The institution has a clearly written, officially adopted statement of its mission in education and community development.*

The written mission statement, officially adopted by the governing board, defines the institution's role and purpose—why the institution exists, whom it serves, how it serves them and what the principles and philosophy are that will guide its operations. The mission should be clearly linked to the education and development needs of the constituent community. The statement should be concise and easy to read.

STATEMENT OF GOALS

A.2 *The institution has an officially adopted statement of clearly defined education and community development goals.*

The statement of goals describes the outcomes the institution hopes to achieve in accomplishing its mission. Both learner and overall community outcomes may be addressed. Although goals may be framed in broad terms, they must be specific enough to allow for periodic assessment of their attainment. That is, in reading the goals one should be able to identify not only what is to be achieved, but also how.

B. AWARENESS AND USE

ENCOURAGING AWARENESS AND USE

B.1 *Program participants, staff, board members and community residents are familiar with the mission and general goals of the institution.*

All persons associated with the institution or interested in its development should be given written statements of the institution's mission and goals. If the mission and goals are to provide guidelines for thought and action, people must be familiar with them and use them to formulate policies, plan programs and allocate resources. All this can occur if institutional leaders make the goal and mission statements available to all concerned, create opportunities to orient those who are new to the institution, and promote discussion and review of the mission and goals on a regular basis.

C. THE DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW PROCESS

IDENTIFYING COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

C.1 *The institution has identified the geographic and demographic characteristics of the community, with particular emphasis on the socio-economic characteristics of the group(s) it serves.*

Before a community based educational institution can effectively plan to address the community's education and development needs it must have a detailed understanding of the area it serves, the people within it, and the problems they face. Summaries of community data and results of needs analyses should be available to everyone involved in developing or reviewing the mission and goals.

RELATING MISSION TO COMMUNITY NEEDS

C.2 *The mission and goals of the institution are clearly related to the education and development needs of the community.*

A community based educational institution exists to respond to education and development needs within a particular community, and this commitment should be clearly reflected in its mission and goals. A way to ensure that community interests are addressed is to "build in" community representation at every stage of the mission development process, from needs identification through final review.

ENSURING BROAD-BASED PARTICIPATION

C.3 *The mission and goals are developed cooperatively, with participation by board members, staff, program participants, program graduates and community residents.*

To ensure a high degree of responsiveness and accountability and to develop community, staff, learner and board support, it is important that the institution have a process that ensures cooperation and participation in decision-making. The process should encourage active participation by all, and provide a means by which conflicts can be resolved.

REVIEWING THE MISSION

C.4 *The institution's mission is reconsidered at least once every five years.*

Over time, conditions change. An institution will achieve some goals, and learn to see others as needing redefinition. The community and its needs will change as well—partly as result of the institution's intervention. The continuing vitality of an institution depends on periodic internal reviews and updates of its stated mission.

REVIEWING GOALS

C.5 *Goals are evaluated periodically to determine whether they are consistent with the institution's mission.*

As the community's educational and economic development needs change, so must the institution's goals. To ensure the continuing appropriateness and relevance of institutional goals, an internal evaluation program must be established. Any changes made in light of evaluation findings should be approved by the board.

D. THE CENTRAL PREMISE: Linked Individual and Community Development

LINKING INDIVIDUAL GROWTH AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

D.1 *The mission and goals are based on the premise that improvements in quality of life can be achieved through a program that emphasizes the mutuality of individual growth and community development.*

This standard addresses the common premise that underlies community based educational institutions: the belief that education and learning can be productively linked to community development and change. Thus, through its mission and goals, the institution should affirm its commitment to both the personal growth of learners and growth in the economic and social well-being of the community in which they live.

INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT THROUGH LEARNING

D.2 *The mission and goals call for the provision of learning exercises that will empower program participants to gain control of their lives and contribute to the social and economic well-being of their community.*

Another basic aim of community based education is to assist learners to become both personally and socially self reliant—that is, to acquire the skills needed to take charge of their own lives and participate actively in the social, economic, cultural and political development of their community. Such aims should be reflected in the institution's goal statements, along with strategies—e.g., self-help, self-directed training, or community-centered approaches—that the institution believes are most effective in achiving the goals.

E. KEY ISSUES

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

E.1 *The mission and goals recognize the institution's role in economic development, focusing on participants' needs to acquire occupational and enterpreneurial skills and find or create meaningful jobs without necessarily having to leave their community.*

Almost all community based educational institutions have in common the goal of economic development, because most of their constituent communities suffer from unemployment, underemployment and lack of economic opportunity. The mission and goals of these institutions should therefore reflect their understanding that economic well-being is an essential component of self-determination for individuals and communities, and that when opportunities for employment and self-reliance are created within the community, both the individual and the community will benefit.

PRIMARY CONSTITUENCY

E.2 *The mission and goals identify low-income, disenfranchised adults as a primary constituency to be served, without discriminating on the basis of race, sex, ethnicity, religion or handicap.*

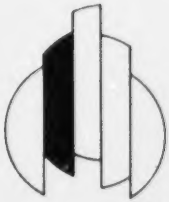
No institution may discriminate in admission to programs or in the provision of educational activities on the basis of factors such as race, religion, sex, ethnicity or handicap. Community based educational institutions have a particularly strong obligation to gear their programs toward special need populations, especially low-income disenfranchised adults who have limited access to traditional post-secondary educational programs. If financial considerations or educational/language requirements create barriers to participation, adequate alternatives must be provided.

COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

E.3 *The mission and goals encourage arrangements with other organizations and collaboration among staff, participants and community residents to solve common problems.*

Affiliations with other public and private community organizations and shared use of existing community resources ensure that a community based educational institution is part of a comprehensive network of groups working together to solve common problems and improve the quality of life in the community. The level and quality of collaboration among people and institutions is a fundamental criterion of excellence for a community based educational institution. Hence, the mission and goals must recognize and promote the establishment of cooperative efforts and effective partnerships.

PART 2
Organization



The mission and goals are ends—outcomes that the institution will seek to accomplish. Educational programs are the primary means for achieving those ends. However, neither a clear mission nor a well-designed program is sufficient to guarantee institutional quality without an effective organization in place to translate broad goals into specific plans for action, and provide essential administrative and financial support.

This section looks at a number of components of organizational effectiveness. One is governance. Organizational effectiveness depends on a carefully developed governing structure, and on the decisions of a knowledgeable, active and community-oriented governing board.

Another component is administration. Strong and responsible leadership, carefully thought-out administrative structures and procedures, and a planned approach to change are essential to a smooth-running operation.

Good financial management ensures the stability and fiscal soundness of the institution.

Good personnel management ensures that staff are competent and committed, and that they have the opportunity to develop and grow over time.

Careful planning ensures that goals are, in fact, achieved, that resources are allocated effectively, and that appropriate growth and development occur.

Community relations and communications must also be considered. Particularly for community based institutions, the quality of relations with constituents and other organizations must be matters of primary concern.

Taken together, these aspects of organization are an important part of what makes achievement of mission and goals possible.

A. GOVERNANCE

LEGAL STATUS

A.1 *The institution is incorporated as a non-profit, community based organization in accordance with federal, state and local legal requirements.*

Incorporation as a tax-exempt non-profit institution is central to the effective management of a community based educational institution. Thus, a prerequisite for any in-depth assessment must be formal incorporation, with papers properly filed in accordance with the requirements of the jurisdiction.

FORMAL STRUCTURE

A.2 *The institution is formally organized as a free-standing legal entity, with its own structure of authority, defined responsibilities and budgeting process.*

As a legal entity (or an identifiable unit within a larger legal entity) the institution must have an identifiable administrative structure and a formal budgeting process which charts both revenues and expenditures.

ROLE OF THE GOVERNING BOARD

A.3 *The institution's governing board is distinct in composition and function from its administration.*

The governing board is the legally chartered entity responsible for overseeing the institution; that is, establishing broad policy and ensuring conformance to legal and fiscal requirements. The board's role as the policy making body should be distinct from the administrative and management roles of staff.

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATION ON THE BOARD

A.4 *The governing board represents community interests and includes community residents.*

The governing board must be broadly representative of the constituents served by the institution. A majority of the board's members should live in the community served. Thus the board can link the institution and the community, and provide information and support for policies and programs.

BOARD KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE

A.5 *The governing board is comprised of individuals whose knowledge, background and experience are pertinent to the governance of the institution.*

The importance of a knowledgeable and active board cannot be underestimated. Board members must understand the problems and needs of the community, and, as a group, possess the management, fundraising, advocacy and other skills needed to govern the institution. A board training and development program can help provide needed skills.

BY-LAWS

A.6 *The institution has a charter or by-laws developed in accordance with its philosophy of education and community development.*

A charter or by-laws, approved by the governing board, legally defines an institution's mission and goals and mandates its operating policies and procedures. A community based institution will want to ensure that these guidelines for its functioning reflect its philosophic approach to education and community development.

STATED BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES

A.7 *The by-laws identify the responsibilities and duties of the governing board, and the means by which they are to be carried out.*

Minimally, the by-laws must establish clear authority for the governing board to act and must define the parameters within which the board will function. These parameters include size, eligibility for membership, method of selection, regular meeting dates with quorum requirements, board structure, and duties and responsibilities of officers.

USE OF COMMITTEES

A.8 *The governing board develops committees or other established structures to help it guide and oversee the various functions of the institution.*

Because the board has a wide range of authority and responsibility, often it must structure its work in terms of independent committees. Each committee reviews a specific area of organizational or program effectiveness.

BOARD ACTIVITY

A.9 *The governing board exercises its full authority for overseeing programs and activities, assessing performance and ensuring the institution's continued existence.*

If the governing board is to exercise its authority and ensure the stability and growth of the institution, it must carry out its prescribed responsibilities. These include holding regular meetings with an established quorum, planning, reviewing progress, hiring and then assessing the performance of the chief executive officer, participating in the evaluation of institutional performance, and participating actively in financial planning, fundraising and advocacy on behalf of the institution.

B. ADMINISTRATION

ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY

B.1 *The institution and its programs are administered by a formally designated individual whose responsibilities and authority are specified in the by-laws.*

The institution should be managed by a single executive officer who is appointed by and responsible to the governing board. The executive officer implements board-approved policies and procedures, oversees day-to-day operations, and directs the institution toward the attainment of its goals.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

B.2 *The institution has an identifiable administrative structure within which it operates to achieve its mission.*

By looking at an organizational chart and other formal documents, interested persons should be able to discover the purpose, functions and inter-relationships of all of the institution's various components. The responsibilities of each staff position and all reporting and supervisory relationships should also be documented.

RELATION TO MISSION/GOALS

B.3 *The institution's administrative structure aids the accomplishment of its mission and goals.*

There is no one "correct" structure for an institution. What is important is that the structure chosen supports the staff's efforts to serve learners and the community more effectively. Thus, staff needs and concerns, prompted by a desire to achieve the mission and goals of the institution, should contribute to decisions about structure.

OPERATIONS MANUAL

B.4 *The institution has an operations manual to guide staff in performing their daily tasks.*

The manual offers detailed guidelines and procedures for performing administrative activities—for example, maintaining and updating records, typing and reproducing documents, maintaining equipment and facilities, and requisitioning and purchasing supplies. The manual, by stating how the work should be done, sets quality standards for the work's accomplishment.

PROCESS FOR MANAGING CHANGE

B.5 *The institution has developed a systematic process for managing organizational changes without undue costs or major disruption.*

An essential ingredient of excellence in community based educational institutions is flexibility; that is, the ability to evolve in response to changing staff and community needs. Organizational change can, however, be disruptive. Deliberate steps must be taken to avoid disruption of services and maintain staff and community support during transitions. Encouraging participation in decisionmaking, discussing the reasons for change, and maintaining continuous communication can help greatly.

IMPLEMENTING CHANGE

B.6 *There is evidence that the institution is able to successfully adapt in order to move toward its goals.*

If change creates dissatisfaction and hinders the smooth functioning of the staff as a unit, the effectiveness of programs will ultimately decline. Organizational changes can be justified only if they advance institutional purposes and can be accomplished with a minimum of disruption.

C. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

ANNUAL BUDGET

C.1 *The institution has an approved budget showing anticipated revenues and expenditures for the current fiscal year.*

Before the beginning of each fiscal year, a budget must be prepared by the executive officer and approved by the governing board. The budget provides the framework for all expenditures for the upcoming year. The executive director and the governing board are accountable for the institution's performance against the budget.

FORECASTING CASH NEEDS

C.2 *The budget accurately projects income and expense levels and cash needs.*

Cash management is essential to minimize the adverse consequences of payment delays or funding source curtailments. The institution should develop contingency plans, including establishment of a cash reserve and preparation of quarterly cash need forecasts for each major program.

RESOURCE ALLOCATION

C.3 *The budget is adequate to support essential programs and administrative operations.*

When resources are limited, deciding how much to budget for each activity can be a difficult process. Activities which are essential to the institution's survival and which reflect its primary mission and goals must be given priority.

FINANCIAL VARIATION REPORTS

C.4 *Monthly financial reports are produced showing the relationship between budgeted and actual revenues and expenses.*

Rarely will a budget predict revenues and expenses with total accuracy. Revisions are to be expected. Monthly reports comparing actual and planned performance are needed if the institution is to take appropriate corrective action. Significant budget revisions should be approved by the governing board.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

C.5 *Financial statements are submitted regularly for approval of the governing board.*

On a predetermined basis, as required by the governing board, the institution must produce fiscal accountability reports. These reports account for all revenues received and all funds expended. The reports can also be used as a source of information for institutional planning and development.

FISCAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

C.6 *The institution has written statements of fiscal policies and accounting procedures, developed in accord with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, that ensure the proper use of funds and full documentation of financial activities.*

Accounting procedures based upon the Generally Accepted Accounting Principles issued by the Association of Independent CPAs ensure fiscal responsibility, accountability, and stability. They set forth the means by which the institution accounts for and documents expenditures on a continuous basis and, if appropriate, according to the requirements of each funding source.

ACCOUNTING CONTROLS

C.7 *Internal accounting controls are used to safeguard the institution's assets.*

Internal control procedures protect the institution from loss or theft of cash, property and other assets and ensure the accuracy and reliability of financial records. Minimally, there should be procedures for handling cash receipts, determining the reasonableness of costs and expenses prior to disbursement, authorizing wage payments to employees and consultants, and inventorying and maintaining equipment, property and other assets.

ANALYZING PROGRAM COSTS AND BENEFITS

C.8 *The institution relates program costs to actual outcomes and benefits for learners and the community.*

Budgeting and accounting systems should allocate resources and costs to specific programs or major functions of the institution. Such costing allows fiscal and program staff to quickly spot the source of discrepancies between planned and actual costs. More important, it allows staff and board members to analyze costs in relation to program outcomes (e.g., enrollments, completions, successful placements), and use the information for planning, decision-making and further goal-setting.

REVIEWING COST DATA

C.9 *Cost data are studied to discover cost-saving measures.*

Detailed cost data for various functions over a number of years can significantly aid the institution's efforts to implement cost-saving measures. Often a marked shift in the ratio of different line item costs (e.g., overhead to direct program costs or personnel costs to overall budget) from year to year will indicate areas deserving special attention. When the proposed budget shows line item expenditures significantly exceeding expenditures in a previous year, justification may be required.

FINANCIAL AUDIT

C.10 *The fiscal process includes an annual financial audit.*

The institution should conduct an annual audit of its programs to ensure proper recording of receipts and expenditures. The audit

should be prepared by an independent certified public accountant. The audit report should include specific recommendations to remedy any weaknesses identified.

FISCAL RECORDS

C.11 *Records are maintained to document compliance with established fiscal policies, accounting procedures, and financial controls.*

Records and source documentation are needed for the financial audit. At a minimum, the available accounting records (backed up by source documentation supporting each entry) should include cash receipt and disbursement journals, a payroll register, checkbooks, and a general ledger containing current information regarding assets, liabilities, fund balance, income, and expenses for each program. Source documents include cancelled checks, paid bills, receipts, grant award documents and similar items. All records must be maintained in secure, fire-proof locations for a period of at least five years.

D. PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

D.1 *The institution has an employee handbook or a personnel policies and procedures manual guiding the management of its human resources.*

An employee handbook or personnel manual helps staff and volunteers understand what is expected of them and what they can expect from the institution. The personnel policies should comply with local, state, and federal labor laws regarding employment of the handicapped, sex discrimination in employment and other equal employment opportunity and affirmative action issues.

HANDBOOK CONTENTS

D.2 *The employee handbook is sufficiently comprehensive to meet the orientation and information needs of employees and volunteers.*

The handbook should ensure consistent application of uniform procedures for recruitment, hiring, supervision, training and remuneration, and should notify paid staff, volunteers and consultants of their rights, benefits and responsibilities.

FAMILIARITY WITH THE HANDBOOK

D.3 *Both paid staff and volunteers are familiar with the policies and procedures in the employee handbook.*

Each employee of the institution should have access to an up-to-date copy of the employee handbook. Moreover, opportunities should exist for orienting new employees and for periodically reviewing policies and procedures with all employees. Such opportunities are important to ensure understanding and acceptance and to allow suggestions and feedback.

CONSISTENCY WITH MISSION

D.4 *Personnel policies and procedures are consistent with the institution's mission and goals.*

Lofty missions and goals mean little if they cannot be translated into operating policy and practice. Personnel policies and procedures can reflect the institution's mission and goals in a number of ways. For example, the institution's commitment to community involvement can find expression in policies for hiring qualified individuals living in the community and for motivating employees to strive for high levels of community service. Philosophies of nondiscrimination can find expression in procedures for equitable determination of salaries and career advances and for fair resolution of grievances.

CONGRUENCE OF POLICY AND PRACTICE

D.5 *The personnel policies and procedures are consistent with the institution's organizational structure and management style.*

Unless a proper fit exists between mission and goals, organizational structures and operating policies, the effectiveness of the organization declines and personnel problems such as high turnover, burn-out, dissatisfaction and poor performance become evident. Problems also occur when staff perceive that managers fail to practice what they preach.

HIRING POLICY

D.6 *The institution has an established policy for recruiting and hiring qualified staff and volunteers who are committed to its education and development goals.*

If a community based educational institution is to advance its purposes and attain its objectives, the instructional and administrative

staff and volunteers must be competent and committed to the mission and goals of the institution. Competence can be attained through measures other than professional preparation or academic training. For example, a person may be highly qualified by reason of experience directly related to the position sought. In order to assess applicants' qualifications properly there should be a written job description for each staff position, defining the minimum levels of education, work experience, and community experience required. Moreover, to assure selection of competent and committed people, screening and selection procedures and criteria should be clearly designated in written policy and consistently observed.

HIRING PRACTICES AND OUTCOMES

D.7 *Recruitment, selection and hiring practices are effective in obtaining and retaining adequate numbers of qualified, committed people.*

Hiring and keeping competent and committed staff is fundamental to the quality of education for community based educational institutions. Each institution has a responsibility to develop recruitment and selection standards and training activities that will ensure an adequate level of qualified paid and volunteer staff to meet its needs. The quality and effectiveness of educational programs should not be adversely affected by a shortage of qualified persons.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

D.8 *The institution has a staff development program that provides opportunities for on-the-job training and continuing education of paid staff and volunteers.*

For community based educational institutions, learning is a continuous life-long process. Not only do students learn through their interactions with staff, but the instructors learn and grow as well. This represents one essential aspect of staff development. Another important element is planned, on-going in-service training and continuing education. Effective training depends on careful assessment of staff needs and clear definition of objectives and learning activities leading to improved performance. An annual performance appraisal is a sound basis for assessing staff needs.

PERSONNEL RECORDS

D.9 *A personnel record is maintained for each employee, including volunteers.*

A personnel file is maintained for each staff member and volunteer as a confidential record of the history of employment and performance within the institution.

E. PLANNING

FORMAL PLANNING PROCESS

E.1 *A formal planning process is undertaken by the institution to develop its long-range plans for the next three to five years.*

Community based educational institutions need to develop long-term goals and objectives and to ensure that steps are taken to achieve them. The formal planning process involves detailed consideration of all major factors (activities, personnel, materials, resources, etc.) needed to achieve the agreed upon goals and objectives.

LONG-RANGE PLANNING

E.2 *As a result of the planning process, the institution has a written long-range plan describing and charting goals, objectives, operations and activities for the next three to five years.*

The long-range program plan is the written culmination of the planning process. The plan describes and charts the goals, objectives and activities for all major programs and functions of the institution for at least three years. It provides detailed guidelines for organizing and implementing educational programs and for evaluating their effectiveness.

COOPERATION IN PLANNING

E.3 *The long-range plan is the result of a cooperative effort involving board members, staff, program participants, graduates and community residents.*

Planning often means establishing priorities in the face of competing needs and limited resources. To ensure a high degree of support and commitment for the institution's decisions, it is important that the planning process be a cooperative one, involving participation and discussion among board members, staff, learners and community representatives.

RELATION TO COMMUNITY NEEDS

E.4 *The needs of the community, as determined by an assessment of current and projected conditions, provide the foundation for developing the long-range plan.*

The planning process should begin with an assessment of the present and emerging needs of the target community. The characteristics and needs of the community provide a foundation for determining goals and developing practical and specific plans to realize them.

RELATION TO LEARNER NEEDS

E.5 *A diagnostic assessment of learners' present and potential needs contributes to the long-range plan.*

Program planners must also take into account the specific academic and support needs of adult learners who enter the program. It is important, therefore, that learner diagnostic information be fully documented and be used in program planning.

ON-GOING USE

E.6 *The long-range plan is used as an overall guide to program operation.*

The long-range plan should be a guide to on-going institutional action and decision-making. A well thought-out document can be used to define staff responsibilities and program objectives, to monitor progress, to conduct annual reviews, and to orient new staff, volunteers and board members.

EVALUATION PLAN

E.7 *The long-range plan is the basis for a written evaluation design to measure the extent to which goals are achieved.*

Using the long-range plan as the basis for defining desired institutional outcomes and processes, an evaluation plan should be developed to appraise institutional effectiveness. The written evaluation design should describe the purpose of the evaluation, the nature of the data to be gathered, the ways data should be presented, and the types of questions to be addressed.

USE OF EVALUATION PLAN

E.8 *The evaluation design is the basis for on-going evaluation of institutional goals.*

The institution should allocate resources and staff time for periodic evaluation of its goals according to the procedures specified in the evaluation design. The findings should be relevant to long-range planning and be used by those involved in decision making.

LONG-RANGE FINANCIAL PLAN

E.9 *The institution has a written long-range plan projecting expected financial resources for the next three to five years.*

Financial planning is an essential component of long-range program planning. After long-term goals, objectives and policies are articulated, the institution must determine associated costs and then take steps to ensure that sufficient financial resources are available to achieve the goals. The written financial plan provides a basis for establishing priorities and developing a systematic approach to fundraising. The plan should be reviewed and reassessed annually by the governing board.

FUNDRAISING PLAN

E.10 *The institution has a fundraising development plan to achieve income diversification, financial independence and security.*

Income diversification—the ability to garner funds from a variety of federal, state, local and private sources—is critical to the survival and stability of community based educational institutions. A comprehensive fundraising and development plan ensures that all potential sources of funds are considered, including tuition and fees, philanthropic organizations, grassroots fundraising efforts, grants and contracts, and investment opportunities (including for-profit ventures).

PLANNING TO CHARGE FOR SERVICES

E.11 *There is a written plan to charge and collect tuition, dues or fees for services.*

In order to survive, most community based educational institutions must charge tuition or fees for services rendered. However, student fees must reflect costs per unit of service and must not create a barrier to participation in programs. Therefore, the plan for charging and collecting fees should detail a sliding scale for learners who are unable to pay. Also, the institution should help eligible learners obtain financial aid and tuition assistance funds.

PLANNING FOR PHILANTHROPIC FUNDRAISING

E.12 *There is a written plan for identifying philanthropic sources of funding.*

Philanthropy is a potential source of revenue if an institution develops systematic procedures for identifying and contacting foundations and corporations whose guidelines fit with the goals and objectives of its programs. Individual philanthropists can also be identified and contacted. In raising private funds, the institution should state clearly how the funds will be applied to achieve specific objectives.

PLANNING FOR GRANTS AND CONTRACTS

E.13 *Through established procedures, the institution is able to identify and pursue appropriate state or local grants and contracts.*

Institutions wishing to be successful in identifying grant/contract opportunities must establish a process to systematically research potential funding sources and their requirements. If a decision is

made to submit a proposal, a staff member should be designated as responsible for managing the development of the proposal, holding an internal quality review, and following up with the funding source after submission.

INVESTMENT PLANNING

E.14 *The institution has explored strategies for generating income through a variety of investment opportunities, including forming for-profit ventures.*

Many community based educational institutions are beginning to consider investment opportunities as an untapped source of revenue for their programs. Procedures and criteria should be established to review and assess the costs, risks, and potential benefits of each investment option.

F. COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

PUBLIC INFORMATION PROGRAM

F.1 *The institution has a program of public information, education and communication to build community awareness and support of its mission, goals, programs, achievements and future plans.*

Community based educational institutions are a relatively new concept in adult education and community development. It is important, therefore, that a planned and continuing program of public information be conducted to build community support.

INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

F.2 *The institution informs a wide audience about its mission, goals, programs, achievements and future plans.*

Communicating with a wide audience usually requires disseminating a variety of informational materials, including catalogues, brochures, pamphlets, newsletters and news releases, and reports. The materials should be written clearly and should portray accurately the past accomplishments, current activities and future plans of the institution. Adequate supplies of informational materials should be on hand at all times.

FACE-TO-FACE COMMUNICATION

F.3 *Personal contacts are used to achieve two-way communication with a smaller target audience.*

Often the most effective means of communication in low-income and minority communities is through face-to-face contact. The institution should organize and conduct community forums, neighborhood meetings and discussions with citizen groups to increase public awareness of its programs. Such meetings encourage open discussions, and any questions can be dealt with directly and immediately. Also, these meetings tend to promote support for the institution and its programs through word-of-mouth.

DEVELOPING COMMUNITY SUPPORT

F.4 *Community residents and leaders support the mission, goals and activities of the institution.*

To build strong community support, efforts must be made to consult regularly with community and religious leaders. Relationships must also be established with other community organizations to discover how programs and services inter-relate and to develop an adequate referral system for individuals whose needs the institution cannot meet.

OUTREACH/RECRUITMENT PLAN

F.5 *The institution has developed a written plan that describes its outreach/recruitment goals, objectives and activities.*

A specific plan for outreach and recruitment of adult learners is essential for survival and growth. The plan should define outreach goals and objectives based on an assessment of community needs and the institution's capability to meet these needs, and should provide for referral. The plan should also specify the individual(s) responsible for coordinating outreach and recruitment activities and the roles and responsibilities of board members, staff, graduates and current participants.

OUTREACH/RECRUITMENT ACTIVITIES

F.6 *There is evidence that the outreach program is effective.*

Accurate and up-to-date documentation of outreach, recruitment and referral will help the institution assess the effectiveness of its efforts. The information can also be useful in identifying changing needs and characteristics of residents and can contribute to decisions about modifying programs.

IDENTIFYING BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

F.7 *The institution actively seeks to identify and examine the barriers that tend to limit participation in its programs and services.*

Barriers to program participation may include lack of awareness of programs, unavailability of appropriate programs, access problems—for example inadequate transportation, inability to afford fees and tuition, or language difficulties—or psychological or cultural unacceptability of programs or staff. Community assessments should help in identifying such barriers.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS

F.8 *A plan of action has been developed and implemented to overcome the barriers limiting participation in programs and services.*

Community based institutions exist to provide educational options for adults who, for a variety of reasons, have been bypassed by traditional postsecondary education. Thus, helping to remove or reduce barriers to participation is not only an effective outreach strategy, but a philosophically essential one.

INTERORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONS

F.9 *The institution maintains working relations with other public and private educational and service agencies in the community.*

Interagency cooperative arrangements allow learners to avail themselves of resources and services that might not otherwise be available. Such arrangements also stretch scarce resources for the benefit of the community as a whole.

PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

F.10 *The institution promotes the involvement of board members, staff and program participants in neighborhood and community activities.*

Board members, staff and learners should be encouraged to participate actively in community affairs, acting as catalysts to mobilize resources and support to respond to social, economic and political problems affecting the community. Effective involvement in community activities will also build public support for the institution's own programs.

PARTICIPATION IN PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

F.11 *Staff and board members are members of professional associations and participate in professional activities at local, state and national levels.*

Community based educational institutions tend to operate in relative isolation, with staff highly involved in the locally-based, pragmatic tasks essential to the bread-and-butter goals of the institution. It is important to minimize the negative effects of such isolation by encouraging membership and participation in state and national organizations that promote community based education. Such organizations encourage networking and information sharing and provide opportunities for staff training and development.

PART 3

Programs and Outcomes

This section examines five aspects of program effectiveness: program design, the learning process, learning content, support for programs, and evaluation of program processes and outcomes. Of course, to some extent the separations are arbitrary. It is difficult, for example, to look at the design of programs without taking into account the outcomes they are intended to achieve. Similarly, it is often difficult to separate the content of learning in a community based program from the interactive process through which learning takes place.

Many of the indicators of quality included in this section reflect themes already discussed in the section on mission and goals—an emphasis on linked individual and community development, a commitment to serving people with special needs, and an emphasis on cooperation and active participation, for example. The section also emphasizes the importance of assessment and evaluation. Individual learning assessments allow learners and instructors to adjust and improve the learning experience. Program-wide process and outcome evaluations provide the information that guides planners in improving the quality of programs as a whole.

A. PROGRAM DESIGN

RELATION OF OBJECTIVES TO MISSION

A.1 *Program objectives are derived from and are consistent with the stated mission and goals of the institution.*

An institution's educational and community development programs are the vehicle for achieving its mission and goals; therefore, demonstrable relationships should exist between program objectives and institutional purpose. Continuing internal evaluation will ensure that (1) none of the accepted goals of the institution is overlooked among program objectives; and (2) existing programs and objectives are within the scope of the stated mission and goals.

OUTCOME-ORIENTED OBJECTIVES

A.2 *Programs are outcome-oriented—that is, structured to achieve clearly defined learner and community-related objectives.*

Objectives for each program or course of study should be stated in terms of outcomes (or results sought) for learners and for the community. Outcome-oriented objectives should identify (1) what changes in knowledge, competency and behavior are expected of learners who complete the program, (2) what level of achievement is expected, (3) how progress toward achievement will be measured, and (4) when the changes are expected to occur. Desired community outcomes should also be identified.

SEQUENCING OF COURSES AND ACTIVITIES

A.3 *Each program is designed as an integrated sequence of experiences and learning activities structured to progressively move learners toward achieving stated objectives.*

All learning activities and community-related field work experiences that make up a program of instruction should work together to enable learners to achieve overall objectives. Activities should be selected carefully and organized logically to avoid fragmentation or duplication.

STANDARDS OF ACHIEVEMENT

A.4 *Clearly defined standards have been set up by which learners' progress and graduates' success in meeting objectives can be assured.*

Defining expected outcomes and related activities does not ensure that participants will actually achieve the objectives. A missing element is the establishment and application of clearly-defined and measurable performance standards to (1) verify learners' readiness, (2) monitor on-going progress, (3) provide useful feedback and guidance, and (4) depending on the program, demonstrate that learners have met desired objectives before earning credits, degrees or licensure. Each program or course of study, regardless of whether it leads to a degree or certification, should have appropriate and consistently applied entry-level, interim-level and exit-level standards. However, none of these standards should represent a single, formal or unyielding measure of competence.

RESPONSIVENESS TO INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

A.5 *Programs, learning activities and performance standards are designed and applied with sufficient flexibility to accommodate participants' different needs, life experiences, learning goals, and rates of development.*

Because the aspirations and needs of learners vary greatly, the institution has an obligation to offer a range of learning options, assessment alternatives, and counseling services to account for individual differences. A primary goal of community based education is to help all participants learn and succeed regardless of their initial level of competence or rate of development. This "value-added" process should begin immediately after admission to the program with the creation of an individual learning plan that makes use of the range of options and alternatives available. The process should continue until the learning objectives are achieved.

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

A.6 *Program materials and learning activities are selected or developed with concern for learners' unique social, economic, cultural and ethnic characteristics.*

Specific criteria and procedures should be established for the selection or development of program materials (books, magazines, newspapers, guides, audio-visuals, programmed instructional materials, community resources, etc.) and learning activities. An important criterion is the extent to which the materials and learning experiences respond to learners' unique social and cultural needs. The involvement of learners in the selection and development process is essential.

LIFE EXPERIENCES

A.7 *The institution recognizes learners' previous life experiences when such experiences are relevant to its programs.*

Most learners participating in community based educational programs have had few opportunities for formal post-secondary education. Yet many are knowledgeable and qualified because of rich life experiences. When such experiences are directly related to the objectives of the program, the institution should recognize them by permitting substitutes for related program requirements, or by providing credit as appropriate. Of course, procedures for evaluating relevant life experiences must be established and applied equitably.

B. THE LEARNING PROCESS

PARTICIPATING IN LEARNING DESIGN

B.1 *Within the constraints imposed by institutional standards, participants are involved in setting their own learning objectives and planning the experiences needed to achieve them.*

An important tenet of community based education is that programs should fit learners, rather than learners be fitted into programs. By becoming involved in the design of their own learning, participants make sure that what they learn and do will be relevant to their needs. At the same time, they put into practice skills associated with self-reliance and taking control over one's own life—skills that the institution is committed to build.

DEVELOPING INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PLANS

B.2 *Each participant, working with staff, develops an individual learning plan for the achievement of learning objectives.*

Outcomes of the participatory design process outlined above should be documented so that expectations and responsibilities are clarified for both the learner and the institution. An individual learning plan typically includes learning objectives, the time frames for their achievement, approaches to be taken in meeting the objectives (including community experiences and use of community resources), the designated individual or individuals responsible for facilitating learning, and evaluation methods for assessing progress and achievement. The plan is reviewed periodically and, if necessary, revised.

BUILDING ON LIFE EXPERIENCES

B.3 *Participants' prior life experiences serve as a foundation for learning.*

Learning cannot occur in a vacuum; it must be unified and integrated within some context. Participants bring to the community based learning experience a wealth of cultural and environmental understanding which should not be overlooked. Rather, prior life experiences should serve as a strong foundation for further growth and change, and should be considered in developing learning objectives and activities.

TAKING AN ACTIVE ROLE IN LEARNING

B.4 *Individuals are encouraged to participate in their own learning, and to assume an active, independent role rather than be passive recipients of information.*

Learning in a community setting requires interaction between the learner and the environment. Learners assimilate and integrate information by participating actively and then reflecting on what has taken place. For this to occur with maximum effectiveness, learning activities and materials must be (a) structured to encourage participation and (b) relevant to individual participants' learning objectives and abilities.

INTEGRATING LEARNING AND LIFE

B.5 *The learning process involves activities which enable participants to integrate what is learned with their lives in the community.*

A major theme for community based education is the relevance of program offerings to participants' lives. Learning in a community based program should not be something *apart from* a participants' on-going life in the community, but rather *part of it*. This integration can be achieved by using the community as a setting for learning, and by tailoring experiential learning activities to conform to individuals' unique educational needs, learning styles, and living and work experiences.

BUILDING A SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

B.6 *Learning takes place in a supportive, cooperative learning environment in which participants and staff help each other succeed, and in which they work together to help other learners and the community.*

Competition emphasizes winning and success—but in order for someone to win, others must lose. For persons with a history of losing out in academic competition, a competitive learning environment is more likely to re-instill a sense of failure than breed a desire to excel. Moreover, the pressure to win often destroys the quality of mutual caring and support. It is precisely this quality that community based education seeks to instill. Support may be formal or informal. It can involve learners and instructors collaborating on projects, learners forming study groups or tutoring each other, learners and community residents working together to solve a community problem—or any of a number of other win-win situations.

ASSESSMENT AS PART OF LEARNING

B.7 *Testing and assessment support learning by measuring in a non-competitive way the progress participants are making toward their individual learning goals.*

Minimizing competitive values does not mean eliminating testing or assessment. On the contrary, finding out what participants have accomplished and how much they have learned and changed as a result of their program experiences is crucial—and requires considerable testing. Testing, however, should support the learning process, and help learners move toward their objectives. Such testing should have the following characteristics: (1) use of multiple assessment methods (including objective tests, simulations, writing assignments, interviews, portfolio reviews, work samples, performance tests, etc.); (2) repetition of measures (before, during and after participation) to determine on-going progress; (3) use of test results or feedback to provide guidance and modify individual learning plans; and (4) emphasis on measuring absolute levels of competence to compare expected and actual performance.

LEARNING RELATIONSHIP

B.8 *Cooperative relationships between learners and instructional staff create mutually beneficial opportunities for learning.*

An important part of the learning process is the nature and quality of the relationship between the learner and the faculty member or learning facilitator. In a community based educational institution, this relationship is more egalitarian then hierarchical. Participants and faculty learn from each other. Close association, one-to-one contact and dialogue focused on solutions to problems of mutual concern are a few of the elements that make the relationship special.

C. LEARNING CONTENT

GENERAL EDUCATION

C.1 *Program offerings contribute to learners' intellectual growth and personal development by helping them achieve a broad base of knowledge and understanding of their world, cope effectively with uncertainty, challenge social injustice and resolve wisely the problems they and society face now or in the future.*

An important goal of any community based education program is to prepare learners to deal effectively with issues and problems in a changing and uncertain world. To achieve this goal, program offerings must help learners acquire a range of critical understandings and proficiencies. For example, learners must be able to: understand their own and others' history and culture, apply altruistic and humanistic values by acting in ways that demonstrate concern for human welfare, become aware of their environment and the forces that affect their lives, acquire aesthetic sensibilities, develop life-long learning interests, and achieve self-understanding. Realizing these objectives, requires more than mere passive acquisition of knowledge compartmentalized along traditional disciplinary lines. The individual empowered to cope with change must also have learned how to *integrate* and *use* knowledge to analyze and evaluate complex problems and find and apply acceptable solutions. In effect, then, the quality of general education offerings is measured not only by what and how much learners know from their experiences but also by the ways they apply such knowledge in dealing with people, problems, and life situations.

FUNCTIONAL COMPETENCE

C.2 *Program offerings address learners' needs to acquire the knowledge and skills required to be a well-functioning member of the community and the society as a whole.*

Before they can be fully contributing members of their community and society, people must have acquired the reading, writing, listening, speaking, problem-solving and computational skills they need to comprehend their world and function in it. An important index of program effectiveness is thus the extent to which learners master basic skills and attain a reasonable level of functional competence. Determination of what is a reasonable level should be based on (1) program objectives and quality standards which the institution has set forth, and (2) each learner's functional needs and learning objectives as defined in the individual learning plan.

ABILITY TO ACHIEVE ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY

C.3 *Program offerings address learners' needs to achieve personal economic self-sufficiency and contribute to the community's economic development.*

A central goal for most community based educational institutions is to help poor people break out of poverty without necessarily having to leave their community. If the goal is to be achieved, programs must focus on developing the competencies learners need to either (1) obtain salaried employment in existing community jobs or (2) create new opportunities through self-employment or cooperative ventures.

COMMUNITY CONSCIOUSNESS

C.4 *Program offerings emphasize development of a sense of community responsibility and concern for the well-being of others.*

Concern for the public interest and an emphasis on improving the quality of life for the community as a whole are at the heart of the community based approach to education. Both the content of program offerings and the process through which learning takes place should promote a strong sense of community identity and a recognition of shared responsibility for furthering each other's growth.

ABILITY TO ANALYZE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS AND EFFECT CHANGE

C.5 *Program offerings cultivate learners' abilities to analyze social, political and economic problems confronting the community and then to take appropriate action.*

Most general education programs seek to develop analysis and problem-solving skills. In community based programs, however, an important further dimension is added: analysis is linked to action in the real world. As participants analyze and judge conditions that affect their lives, and consider and apply strategies for action, they not only develop their own skills but also put them to good use in the context of actual community problems.

D. PROGRAM SUPPORT

STAFF SUPPORT

D.1 *Each program offering is supported by competent instructional and support staff, and an adequate administrative organization.*

Program offerings should be adequately staffed to allow attention to each participant's individual learning needs. The staff should include instructors with appropriate subject area, community development and interpersonal skills, supplemented as needed by qualified tutors and volunteers. Administrative support should also be provided. If administrators are involved in supervising or training instructional staff or in planning and reviewing educational programs, they should be qualified to carry out such tasks.

LEARNING RESOURCES

D.2 *Each program offering is supported by appropriate learning materials and learning resources.*

Learning materials that support program offerings must be designed with the same attention to learning outcomes and participant needs as program activities, and must be readily available to all learners. In addition, the institution must ensure that learners have ready access to any other books, journals, reference materials or community resources they may need. Inter-organizational arrangements can help greatly in extending the range of easily available resources.

LEARNER SUPPORT SERVICES

D.3 *Adequate assessment and counseling services are available for participants.*

Admission, pre-testing, referral, counseling, evaluation and placement services are an essential component of program support. All such services should be tailored to participants' individual needs, and should be aimed at helping them succeed. Joint planning and coordination among instructors or facilitators and counselors tends to increase the efficacy of counseling services.

FACILITIES

D.4 *Adequate facilities are available for the institution's programs.*

All instructional and administrative facilities of the institution must meet local fire, safety and sanitation standards. Within each facility, space, light, heat and ventilation should be adequate for the use to which it is put.

FINANCIAL BASE

D.5 *Adequate financial resources are provided to support program operations and activities.*

Funds must be budgeted to meet the costs of essential programs and support services. The institution should also have in place a realistic long-range financial plan to ensure each program's continuity and development.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

D.6 *The institution makes maximum use of the skills of community volunteers and the resources of other community organizations.*

Community resources can be a significant source of program support. Skilled, trained volunteers, acting as tutors, facilitators or subject matter experts, are a valuable adjunct to paid instructional staff. Learning resources—for example, library collections, films, art collections, research facilities, technical equipment or professional expertise—can often be made available through inter-organizational arrangements. An institutional priority, therefore must be the recruitment of qualified volunteers and the identification and securing of resources for learning.

E. EVALUATION

PROGRAM EVALUATION: WHY AND HOW

E.1 *All programs are regularly evaluated to examine their implementation, assess their effectiveness, and determine their appropriateness in achieving the institution's goals.*

Program evaluation should assist a community based educational institution in at least three ways: in developing new programs, in improving on-going programs, and in appraising the overall effectiveness of programs in meeting their objectives. If evaluation findings are to be used for these purposes, the institution should consider program evaluation as an integral part of its overall activities. That is, for each program, evaluation objectives should be established; an evaluation plan should be developed that includes appropriate activities, methods, procedures and time tables; appropriate staff should be assigned to tasks; and needed resources should be allocated. As with other institutional activities, board members, staff and learners should participate in identifying and using the results for decision making and policy development.

PROCESS EVALUATION TO AID PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

E.2 *Especially for newly introduced programs, the institution's evaluation activities contribute useful and timely information to decisions about program modification and improvement.*

To make sound decisions about program improvement, community based educators need to know more than the extent to which a program is meeting its objectives. They must know the details of what is happening. They must have information describing the program's content and its processes, including delivery systems. Formative or process evaluation should encompass each of the broad areas of actual program operations including: (1) assessment of program objectives, (2) analysis of program content, (3)

appraisal of instructional strategies and the learning process, (4) appraisal of program and learner support services, and (5) appraisal of the competencies of staff and volunteers. The key to a successful process evaluation is to be able to determine how each factor contributed to or hindered the success of the program. Recommendations can then be framed in terms of specific practical actions that could be taken to improve the program.

OUTCOMES FOR LEARNERS

E.3 *Evaluation activities yield timely and useful information about the effects of each program on learners.*

The bottom line for program evaluation should be to measure and determine how much individuals have learned and actually developed from participation in the programs. Learner outcome data should be related to the objectives of each program and should include: (1) measures of successful participation in and completion of the programs consistent with the individual's initial plans; (2) measures of changes in knowledge or competency demonstrating that graduates have achieved the quality standards established by the institution; (3) measures of learners' and graduates' satisfaction with the quality of the program (including program offerings, learning environment, materials, and interpersonal relationships); and (4) measures of post-graduation employment and community involvement of graduates, with particular attention to measures of community commitment and responsibility (such as support of community improvement efforts, participation in community affairs and volunteer service to the institution).

IMPACT ON COMMUNITY NEEDS

E.4 *The institution's summative program evaluation efforts are directed toward determining whether the community needs that the institution's programs were designed to serve still exist.*

Because community based educational institutions have missions and goals that are focused equally on individual growth and community-wide development, program evaluation efforts should try to monitor and document trends in the target community and the

relationship of community changes to the implementation of its programs. Evaluation of impact on a community is not easy; it requires using such techniques as demographic analyses and clinical case studies to identify trends, posit hypotheses and determine underlying relationships. The efforts are important for the institution to keep current about and responsive to the needs of the community, and ultimately to enhance its effect on community life.

USING EVALUATION RESULTS FOR MAKING DECISIONS

E.5 *Staff, board and participants use evaluation findings for decision-making and policy development.*

Unless findings are relevant and used for decision-making, the cost of evaluation studies cannot be justified. Well thought-out evaluations, however, can contribute significantly to the overall stability and strength of the institution. Evaluation findings can be used by many different audiences for many purposes. For example, community needs assessment and outcome or impact evaluation data can be used by board members, staff and other interested persons to review the mission and goals and develop long-range plans. Process evaluation data are probably most useful to program staff, or to planning groups set up to review on-going programs or revise course offerings. And learner assessment data can be used by both learners and staff to enhance the effectiveness with which learning takes place.

PART 4
Information Management

Information can be an extremely valuable resource. It documents what has taken place, guides current decisions, and aids in future planning. However, like any resource, information must be managed properly.

Most institutions find it helpful to adopt a systems approach to information management. The management information system identifies the data to be collected; why they are needed and how they will be used; how and when data should be gathered, stored and aggregated; who should be provided information, when and in what form; how often records should be updated; and how long records must be maintained. The primary purpose of the system is to ensure that information is available when needed, where needed, in a readily useful form.

This section looks first at the information system as a whole, and then at specific categories of information, including learner characteristics, program characteristics, staff and volunteers, the governing board, financial resources and accounting, fundraising, the community, and arrangements with other organizations.

A. THE MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM

INFORMATION AS A RESOURCE

A.1 *The institution uses information as a resource in support of its organizational and program activities.*

Implicit in this standard is an important distinction between data and information. *Data* are raw, uninterpreted facts. When data are analyzed within the context of a given situation they yield useful *information* on which to base organizational and program decisions. Accurate and timely information can be a valuable resource to a community based educator, helping to improve the way decisions are made. Like other resources, however, information must be properly managed, to ensure that it is available when needed, where needed, and in a readily useful form.

MANAGING THE INFORMATION

A.2 *The institution maintains a standardized system for collecting, organizing, updating, storing and retrieving information.*

Based on careful assessment of actual information needs and institutional capacity to manage information, institutional leaders should design an information system and establish procedures for its operation. Any information system, whether manual or automated, should include, at a minimum, the following specifications: (1) nature, types and format of data to be collected and maintained; (2) procedures for collecting data and periodically updating records; (3) report formats and intended use; (4) procedures for regular audits of records to ensure accuracy; (5) appropriate safeguards to minimize chance of theft or loss of records and protect confidentiality; (6) policies regarding length of time individual records are maintained and how information is released; and (7) identification of staff members responsible for maintaining, updating and in general ensuring the integrity of the system.

USING THE INFORMATION

A.3 *Board members, administrators, staff, and learners use information produced by the system for problem-solving and decision-making.*

An organized data management system has little value to the institution unless it produces appropriate and timely information in a format that decision-makers can readily use both internally for problem solving, and externally for satisfying reporting requirements. For example, the board and administrative staff would find useful a financial assessment report incorporating enrollment and utilization trends and changing community conditions. Teachers and learners would probably be more interested in obtaining clear and concise knowledge about a learner's progress by reviewing the appropriate files and records.

B. CATEGORIES OF INFORMATION—

LEARNER CHARACTERISTICS AND OUTCOMES

B.1 *The management information system maintains accurate information about each program participant.*

For each learner there must be a file that documents pertinent background, current program status, and on-going progress. The file provides the structure for planning individual programs and for monitoring the learner's progress toward individual goals and objectives. It also documents program participation. Aggregate and summary data from these files can be used to generate a variety of institutional reports, including program evaluations, enrollment and utilization reports, learning outcome assessments, and follow-up studies of program graduates.

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

B.2 *The management information system maintains up-to-date personnel information on paid staff and volunteers.*

A confidential personnel record is needed for each staff member and program volunteer. Minimally, each record should contain: (1) initial application and reference letters, if appropriate; (2) EEO-related identifying data; (3) verification of training and community experience; (4) wage and salary information; (5) special skills and competencies; and (6) performance evaluations, including any commendations or disciplinary actions. Summary reports can be used for planning staff development and training programs.

THE GOVERNING BOARD

B.3 *The management information system maintains up-to-date information about the structure and function of the governing board.*

A community based institution should be able to document that its governing board is broadly representative of the constituent community and that board members are actively involved in planning, developing and evaluating programs. Records should show board members' backgrounds, including community orientation and ties, and their current involvement in the affairs of the institution.

PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

B.4 *The management information system maintains up-to-date information about programs and learning resources.*

For planning and evaluation, and in particular for decisions about modifying programs, the institution should maintain up-to-date information about each educational program offered. At a minimum, the information should include: (a) general description—history and overall goals; (b) program requirements, including prerequisites; (c) participants served—enrollment, participation and retention rates; (d) major instructional program objectives; (e) descriptions of learning activities, instructional strategies and materials used; (f) resources (human, material, dollar) needed to carry out activities; and (g) evidence of the extent to which goals and objectives are being achieved.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND ACCOUNTING

B.5 *The management information system documents and accounts for all institutional resources on a continuing basis.*

A financial accounting system backed up by source documentation is needed to ensure accountability for all income and expenditures. The records should identify all sources of funding—federal, state, local and private funds, tuition, investments—and relate income to expenditures for program functions and activities. An inventory of learning and human resources, including consultants, should also be maintained.

FUNDRAISING

B.6 *The management information system maintains accurate information about past and current fundraising efforts.*

Fundraising can be expensive if an institution does not learn from its successes and failures. Therefore, accurate and current records should be maintained, showing names, addresses, and other identifying information about institutions or individuals contacted, and descriptions of the outcomes.

THE COMMUNITY

B.7 *The management information system maintains accurate descriptive information about community needs and characteristics.*

A community based educational institution must have up-to-date information about conditions and problems in the community it serves. The description should give a sense of the physical presence of the community—its geography and its general location in relation to the larger community. It should also include a general demographic analysis of the people being served and their specific needs. Analysis of how conditions are changing over time will help the institution to adjust its goals and programs appropriately.

INTER-ORGANIZATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

B.8 *The management information system documents all formal and informal affiliations with other educational institutions and community based organizations in the community.*

Arrangements that allow the institution to work or share resources with other agencies in the community can be highly productive. To ensure that the purpose and limits of the relationship are clear, however, roles, responsibilities and outcomes should be fully documented.

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